

Received Date: 14th December, 2024Revision Date: 5th January, 2025Accepted Date: 15th January, 2025

The Integrated Conservation and Tourism Masterplan of Tansen

Aditi Neupane^{1*}, Arati Bhandari², Lujula Maharjan³, Nisham Gaire⁴, Prasanna Paudel⁵, Sonima K.C⁶, Sagun Maharjan⁷¹Dept of Architecture, Kathmandu Engineering College, Nepal. E-mail: aditineupane67@gmail.com²Dept of Architecture, Kathmandu Engineering College, Nepal. E-mail: aaratibhandari9861@gmail.com³Dept of Architecture, Kathmandu Engineering College, Nepal. E-mail: maharzanlujula@gmail.com⁴Dept of Architecture, Kathmandu Engineering College, Nepal. E-mail: gairenisham@gmail.com⁵Dept of Architecture, Kathmandu Engineering College, Nepal. E-mail: paudelprasanna75@gmail.com⁶Dept of Architecture, Kathmandu Engineering College, E-mail: sonimakc2@gmail.com⁷Assoc. Professor, Dept of Architecture, Kathmandu Engineering College, Nepal. E-mail: sagun.maharjan@kecktm.edu.np

Abstract— *The Integrated Conservation and Tourism Masterplan of Tansen is a comprehensive project aimed at preserving the historical, cultural and architectural heritage of Tansen, Palpa, while promoting sustainable tourism and economic growth. Tansen, a historic hill town, is renowned for its unique blend of Newari and Magar cultural influences expressed through its rich tangible and intangible heritage including traditional architecture, religious monuments, vibrant festivals and artisanal crafts. Extensive research, mapping and documentation were conducted to identify Tansen's key assets and challenges. Guided by the concept "Tansen's Fading Charm: A Call for Revival," the masterplan seeks to restore Tansen's identity through heritage conservation, adaptive reuse, and sustainable tourism strategies. The design phase emphasizes the restoration of historical structures such as temples, heritage residence etc. with minimal intervention to preserve authenticity and integrity. In addition, adaptive reuse strategies are employed including converting underutilized buildings into homestays, boutique hotels, craft workshops and community spaces. Innovative public spaces like tudikhel, tin dhara and fulbari is revitalized ensuring community engagement and tourist attraction. The masterplan integrates new infrastructure design with heritage sensitivity, incorporating waste management systems, illumination plans for safety and aesthetics. By combining conservation principles with innovative tourism strategies, the project seeks to provide a comprehensive framework for balancing heritage conservation with modern economic needs, offering a sustainable model for community-driven historical preservation and regional upliftment.*

Keywords— *Heritage Conservation, Sustainable Tourism, Adaptive Reuse, Historical Preservation, Authenticity and Integrity, Revitalization*

* Corresponding Author

Introduction

In 1964 the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites was introduced in Venice with the following words: "Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witnesses of their age-old traditions. People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity."

In the same spirit of safeguarding the world's heritage, the town of Tansen stands as a remarkable yet vulnerable example of cultural and historical legacy in need of preservation. Situated on the slopes of Shreenagar Hill in Palpa, Nepal, Tansen embodies centuries of rich traditions and craftsmanship, but like many heritage sites, it faces the challenges of modernity and neglect.

Known for its vibrant Newari and Magar traditions, Tansen features sacred temples, ancient architecture, and cultural practices passed down through generations. It also boasts iconic crafts such as Dhaka weaving and Karuwa production, which have become integral to its identity. Historically, Tansen served as a key trade route and a cultural crossroads, which is reflected in its distinctive architectural styles and vibrant cultural festivals like the Ganesh Jatra and Amar Narayan Jatra.

Despite its rich heritage, Tansen has been threatened by the rise of modern concrete structures, urban sprawl, and the neglect of traditional practices. Its historical charm is

gradually fading, with many of its cultural and architectural assets at risk. The Integrated Conservation and Tourism Masterplan of Tansen was created in response to this crisis, guided by the concept “Tansen’s Fading Charm: A Call for Revival.” This project seeks to restore Tansen’s historic identity through conservation, adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, waste management, and the promotion of sustainable tourism. By doing so, the plan aims to revitalize the town both culturally and economically.

The primary objective of the project is to bring Tansen’s fading charm back to life through various conservation strategies and cultural revitalization efforts, while ensuring the town’s long-term sustainability. The project aims to blend heritage preservation with modern development to create a dynamic and thriving town.

Methodology

The methodology for the Integrated Conservation and Tourism Masterplan of Tansen follows a multi-phase approach, ensuring that all relevant data is gathered, analysed, and acted upon in a structured manner. This process includes in-depth research, thorough documentation, and an emphasis on community participation.

A. Preliminary Research and Analysis

The initial phase of the project focused on gathering essential information about Tansen’s historical, social, cultural, and economic context. This involved:

- **Literature Study:** A comprehensive review of relevant academic literature, international conservation guidelines, and case studies from similar towns.
- **Case Study:** Studying other successful heritage conservation and tourism development projects to extract useful strategies and insights.
- **Site Visit and Stakeholder Engagement:** A 10-day field visit to Tansen enabled firsthand observations of the town’s heritage sites, public spaces, and socio-economic conditions. This visit also facilitated consultations with key stakeholders, including Tansen Guthi members, local residents, artisans, and municipal authorities.
- **Survey and Data Collection:** Surveys were conducted to gather quantitative and qualitative data on the town’s heritage, community needs, and existing infrastructure.

B. Data Processing and Documentation

This phase aimed to synthesize the information collected and develop baseline documentation:

- **Base Map Update:** The existing maps of Tansen were updated to reflect the current physical and infrastructural conditions.
- **Thematic Maps:** Created thematic maps showcasing zoning, heritage sites, road networks, and other urban characteristics.
- **Detailed Report:** A comprehensive report was prepared, documenting the historical, cultural, social, and economic characteristics of Tansen. This report provided the foundational understanding for the masterplan.

C. Problem Identification and Conceptualization

This stage expanded on the documentation to identify key potential and challenges:

- **Identification of Problems and Challenges:** This included urbanization, loss of traditional architecture, inadequate waste management, and the decline of traditional crafts.
- **Identification of Pockets for Development:** Specific areas within Tansen were identified for revitalization, including heritage buildings and public spaces.
- **Masterplan Proposal:** Developed the masterplan based on the concept “Tansen’s Fading Charm: A Call for Revival,” integrating conservation principles with tourism and community-driven development strategies.

The phased approach allowed for a comprehensive and systematic analysis of Tansen’s needs, ensuring that all aspects were considered in the proposed masterplan.

Concept

The concept “Tansen’s Fading Charm: A Call for Revival” captures the project’s essence by emphasizing the restoration of the town’s unique character. The approach focuses on reversing the loss of Tansen’s charm through initiatives that preserve its rich heritage, revive traditional practices, and enhance its socio-economic vitality.

A. Concept Development

The concept was built around several key principles:

- **Restoration of Tansen's Character:** The focus is on revitalizing Tansen's historical beauty, including the restoration of key buildings, temples, and public spaces.
- **Cultural and Socio-Economic Upliftment:** The project seeks to bring economic benefits to the community through sustainable tourism, vocational training, and the revival of traditional crafts such as Dhaka weaving and Karuwa production.
- **Integration of Modern Infrastructure with Heritage Preservation:** While restoring heritage sites, the masterplan also proposes the introduction of modern infrastructure, including waste management systems, sustainable tourism facilities, and eco-friendly transport options.

B. Value Assessment

A comprehensive value assessment was conducted to determine the socio-economic, cultural, and historical values of Tansen. These values guided the design and interventions in the masterplan. Key findings include:

- **Cultural Diversity:** Tansen's rich cultural mix, particularly the Newari and Magar communities, offers a vibrant basis for cultural tourism.
- **Economic Potential:** Traditional crafts and local culinary traditions represent significant economic opportunities.
- **Historical Significance:** Tansen's role as a historic trade route and its unique architectural heritage are invaluable assets that need preservation.

C. Conceptual Zoning

To uplift Tansen, it is essential to focus on three major aspects: economic, cultural and social, and historical. These aspects form the core of the revitalization plan. The area has been divided into several zones based on these key elements, and pockets have been identified for intervention. These pockets represent areas where specific development plans can be implemented to address Tansen's needs.

The zoning process considers the existing infrastructure, local community needs, and the importance of preserving historical landmarks. The interventions proposed are practical solutions that are economically viable and within the town's infrastructure capacity, ensuring that the revitalization efforts are both sustainable and respectful of the town's historical roots. The town was divided into six distinct zones, each addressing specific needs:

- **Tourism Zone:** Features cultural village, farm stay, food hub which promotes local crafts and gastronomy
- **Cultural Zone:** Includes the Bhagwati Temple complex, Fulbari market restoration, and exhibitions showcasing festivals and traditional practices.
- **Socio-Economic Values:** Tansen's diverse cultural groups, traditional crafts like Dhaka weaving and Karuwa production, and renowned hospitality are vital to its identity and economic growth.
- **Cultural Values:** Vibrant festivals, religious traditions, and local cuisine enrich Tansen's cultural fabric.
- **Historical Values:** The town's role as a historic trade hub and its unique architectural styles reflect its historical significance.

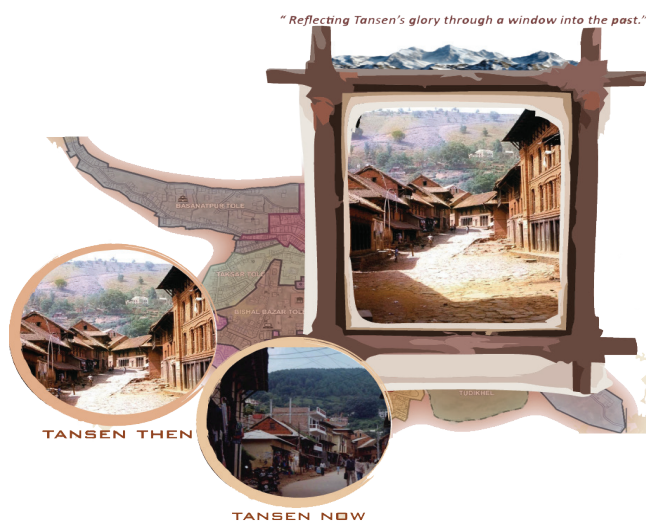


Fig. 1 Tansen's Fading Charm: A Call for Revival



Fig. 2 Conceptual Zoning

Master Plan

The revitalization of Tansen focuses on transforming key pockets of the town into spaces that attract visitors and improve the quality of life for locals. These pockets have been identified through careful analysis, with specific development plans for each. These plans range from preserving historical landmarks to creating new spaces for cultural engagement and economic activity.

One of the most significant interventions is the transformation of the Prasanti School, which was originally a Rana palace. Due to its deteriorating condition and inability to function as a school, the building's new purpose is to become a boutique hotel. This adaptive reuse approach allows the building to maintain its historical significance while generating revenue for restoration and ongoing maintenance. By repurposing this landmark, we are also providing employment opportunities to local residents, fostering the local economy, and enhancing Tansen's appeal to tourists.

Each pocket intervention has been carefully planned to integrate Tansen's cultural and historical fabric while fostering economic growth. From preserving ancient temples to creating new public spaces, the revitalization strategy ensures that Tansen's heritage is at the heart of its transformation.



Fig. 3 Master Plan

Cycling Routes: Capitalizing on Tansen's Terrain

Tansen's hilly terrain is an asset that can be leveraged for promoting cycling as an adventure sport. The proposed cycling routes will cater to adventure tourists who seek an active way to explore Tansen's natural beauty and historical landmarks. Cycling will also encourage a healthier lifestyle for locals, providing an alternative form of transportation and recreation.

With the right infrastructure in place, Tansen can become a destination for cycling enthusiasts, offering scenic routes that allow tourists to enjoy the town's landscapes and cultural sites from a unique perspective. By capitalizing on its terrain, Tansen can attract a new demographic of tourists while promoting sustainable tourism practices.

Waste Management: An Eco-Friendly Approach

In a town that seeks to preserve its historical charm while modernizing, efficient waste management becomes a critical aspect of the revitalization plan. The proposed system incorporates the segregation of solid waste through the use of color-coded dustbins. This waste segregation strategy ensures that organic, recyclable, and non-recyclable waste are handled separately, making the town's waste management process more efficient and eco-friendlier.

Organic waste will first be used as animal feed on farms near Tin Dhara, with any excess composted for agricultural use. Recyclable waste will be collected, reused if possible, or sent to a nearby recycling center. Since Tansen's small size does not require a recycling center on-site, recyclable materials will be efficiently transported to a nearby facility.

Additionally, a wetland system will be constructed along the river to treat wastewater, ensuring that the natural environment is protected and contributing to the sustainability of the town's water resources.

Heritage Walk: A Journey Through Tansen's Past

To engage tourists and locals alike, a heritage walk has been designed to showcase Tansen's cultural, historical, and culinary attractions. The walk offers various itineraries, ranging from one to three days, allowing visitors to explore the town at their own pace. The heritage walk will guide tourists through some of Tansen's most iconic sites, including temples, cultural villages, local markets, and traditional crafts. Along the way, visitors will have the opportunity to experience Tansen's authentic cuisine and participate in hands-on activities such as traditional crafts, further immersing themselves in the town's heritage. The heritage walk is designed to promote sustainable tourism while giving visitors a deeper understanding of Tansen's cultural and historical legacy.

A One-Day Heritage Walk



Fig. 4 One-Day Heritage Walk

The journey begins in the historic Karuwa Ghar stretch, where visitors can admire intricate Newari architecture and learn about the lost-wax technique used in crafting Karuwa vessels. A hearty breakfast at a local food hub follows, featuring traditional dishes like batuk, chiya, and roti. Continuing to the Sculpture Park, visitors reflect on the legacies of prominent personalities before embarking on a scenic hike to Srinagar, soaking in breathtaking views. Midday brings a cultural exchange at the Magar Cultural Village, complemented by a traditional lunch. In the afternoon, the walk explores Shitalpati, Bhagwati Temple, and the Ason stretch, showcasing Tansen's rich history and architecture, with a brief stop for snacks at the Bhimshen stretch. The evening includes visits to Tribhuvan Campus, Birendra Fulbari, and Tindhara, where stories of Rato Machindranath and the Sen School's architecture come alive. The journey concludes at Tudhikhel with kulfi, a tour of the historic Malla House, and shopping for souvenirs at Bhimsen Temple, offering a perfect blend of history, culture, and local charm.

Pocket Interventions: Preserving Local Heritage

Several pockets have been identified for specific interventions to preserve and celebrate Tansen's heritage:

A. Magar Cultural Village

This village will offer visitors a glimpse into the rich heritage of the Magar people. With a gallery of traditional artifacts, workshops for learning local crafts, and authentic dining options, the village will attract tourists and empower the local community by preserving their culture.

B. Amar Narayan Temple Complex

The proposal for this temple complex includes revitalizing the surrounding Fulbari area, which once served as a community gathering space. The plan incorporates rainwater harvesting, green spaces, and a dedicated "Haat Bazar" to promote local vendors. The nearby Pauwa structure will also be restored to enhance the cultural significance of the area.

C. Tindhara

This site, once a significant social gathering place, will be restored to its former glory. The plan includes cleaning up the debris, restoring the stepped well, rebuilding the Kriyaputri Ghar, and creating a park and dairy farm for the community. These interventions will preserve the site's cultural heritage and improve local life.

D. Museum Stretch

The stretch around Mul Dhoka and Tansen Durbar Square will be transformed into a pedestrian-friendly space with green areas, artwork, and restored historical buildings. The Mul Dhoka gate will be restored, and local festivals will be showcased in a Jatra exhibition. A book cafe, local vendor kiosks, and public spaces will further enhance community engagement and tourism.

E. Taksar Stretch

The Taksar area will see the restoration of traditional Newari facades, the conservation of key buildings like Karuwa Ghar and Rato Ghar, and the creation of new cultural spaces. These improvements will transform the stretch into a cultural hub that attracts tourists and preserves Tansen's heritage.

Other significant proposals include:

- A sculpture park commemorating the Anglo-Nepal war.
- Garbe House celebrating Newari culture.
- Ganesh Temple Complex with a serene picnic area.
- Homestays for authentic tourism experiences.
- Tudikhel as a central landmark.
- Bhagwati Temple restoration from a two-tiered to a three-tiered structure.
- A food hub offering traditional cuisine and live kitchens for immersive dining experiences.

Management Plan and Guidelines

The successful implementation of this revitalization plan relies on a collaborative management approach, involving various stakeholders such as the municipality, cultural experts, local communities, and tourism boards. A dedicated management team will oversee the execution of projects, ensuring that they align with Tansen's identity and objectives.

The management plan for the Integrated Conservation and Tourism Masterplan of Tansen incorporates development controls and guidelines inspired by heritage by-laws such as those of Kirtipur which has similar terrain and condition. These regulations are designed to ensure that any development, renovation, or adaptive reuse within Tansen respects its historical, architectural, and cultural heritage. The plan includes:

- **Development Controls:** All construction, renovation, or demolition within heritage zones must be approved to maintain architectural integrity. [1]
- **Land Use Regulations:** Buildings in core zones must retain their original purpose or align with conservation-compatible adaptive reuse. [3]
- **Architectural Standards:** New constructions must reflect traditional styles, using materials like jhingati tiles and carved wood, with visible RCC and modern plaster prohibited. [3]
- **Public Space Protection:** Courtyards, squares, and religious sites must remain unaltered without prior approval. [3]

TABLE I
Management Plan

S.N.	Plan		Stakeholders	Operation modality	Time frame
	Projects	Tole/zone	Management team	Future expansion	
1.	Cultural village	Basantapur tole\tourism	Dedicated management team of cultural experts and Tansen municipality	Socialization space cultural exchange	10 years
2.	Food hub \ café and restaurants	Basantapur, badigaun \tourism, economic	Local people	Promote local cuisines	1-2 years
3.	Temple \ Bihar	Bhagwati, makhan, makaibari, basantapur, amamarganj tole \cultural, uplift	Guthis, department of archeology	Multipurpose area Most vibrant and socializing area	5 years
4.	Bed and breakfast	Bhagwati tole\tourism	Local people	Quality experience for the tourist	5 years
5.	Hiti	Basantapur, amargunj \historical, social	Guthis, department of archeology, local clubs	Provision of sufficient water supply for locals	1-2 years
6	School	Amarganj tole\social	School authorities, ward office	-	1-2 years
7	Stretches	Taksar, basantapur, ason,bhimsen\ historical,economcial, tourism,cultural	Owner, munciplaity	Revive tradtional elevation	10 years
8	Open spaces and parks	Ason tole\social cultural	Local clubs, ward office	Socailization space Breakout zones	10 years
9	Waste management	All	Municipality	Hygienic society	1 year

A critical component of Tansen's revitalization plan is the establishment of detailed guidelines to govern the development and conservation of the town's zones. These guidelines ensure that every intervention respects the town's cultural, historical, and architectural heritage while allowing for modernization that enhances functionality and community well-being.

The guidelines have been tailored to the needs of three distinct zones — Core, Buffer, and Progress Zones—and offer a balanced approach to preservation and development. Let's explore these in detail:

- Core Zone: Prioritize conservation of original materials and structures.
- Buffer Zone: Allow subtle modernization aligned with the historic aesthetic.
- Progress Zone: Support contemporary development respecting traditional principles.

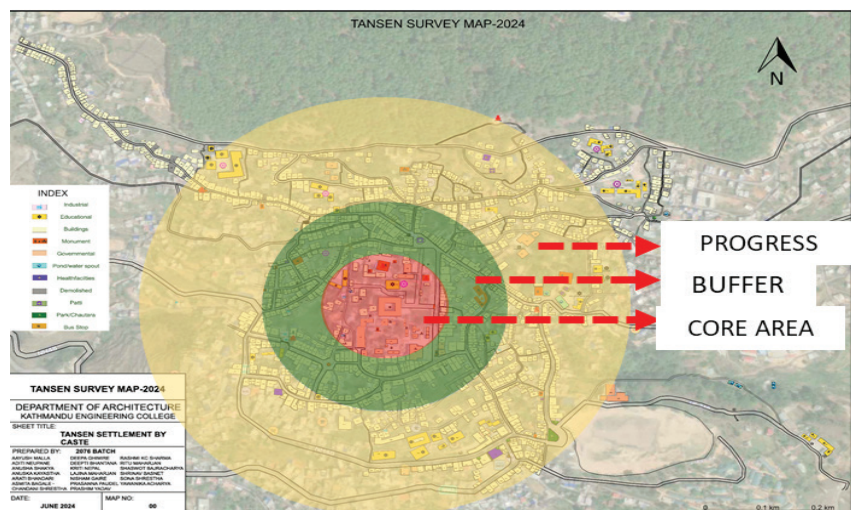


Fig. 4 Guidelines

Results and Discussion

The implementation of the masterplan led to significant outcomes in heritage conservation, economic revitalization, and community empowerment. These results illustrate how targeted interventions can address Tansen's challenges while unlocking its potential.

A. Revived Heritage

Landmarks like Bhagwati Temple and religious shrines have been restored preserving their historical integrity.

B. Adaptive Reuse for Economic Growth

Vacant and underutilized heritage buildings have been repurposed as boutique hotels and craft workshops, supporting local entrepreneurs and enhancing tourist experiences.

C. Public Space Revitalization

Spaces like Tin dhara and Fulbari have been redesigned to facilitate daily social activities

D. Community Empowerment

Workshops and training programs foster local engagement and skill expansion.

Conclusions

The Integrated Conservation and Tourism Masterplan of Tansen provides a comprehensive framework for restoring and revitalizing the town's cultural and historical heritage while promoting sustainable tourism and economic growth. By focusing on heritage conservation, adaptive reuse, and sustainable practices such as waste management, the masterplan seeks to reinstate Tansen's historical charm and ensure its long-term resilience.

The project not only preserves Tansen's unique identity but also enhances its socio-economic vitality through community-driven solutions and cultural revitalization. This approach demonstrates how the integration of heritage preservation with modern needs can foster economic opportunities, cultural pride, and sustainable development, offering a model for other historic towns facing similar challenges.

Acknowledgement

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Kathmandu Engineering College for providing the resources and academic support for this project. We also thank Tansen Municipality for their continuous involvement. Special

thanks to the Tansen Guthi members and local residents for sharing their valuable insights and for the financial support provided by Tansen Guthi, which was crucial to the success of this project.

We are grateful to the local artisans for preserving traditional crafts like Dhaka weaving and Karuwa production, which are key to Tansen's heritage. Finally, our deepest appreciation goes to all stakeholders, consultants, and experts for their guidance and feedback, as well as to the residents of Tansen for their active participation in shaping the future of their town.

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